

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr,

We write to support your engagement with the Mexican government to combat transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). Your efforts to solidify bilateral law enforcement cooperation to stop the trafficking of arms and drugs is of utmost importance for the safety of southern border states and the country.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's 2019 National Drug Threat Assessment, TCOs most commonly smuggle drugs into the United States in passenger and commercial vehicles through Ports of Entry (POEs).¹ Alarming, only 15 percent of commercial vehicles and less than 2 percent of passenger vehicles that enter the United States through land POEs are scanned with non-intrusive inspection (NII) systems to detect contraband.² Given that highly addictive and lethal drugs like heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl – the primary driver of the opioid crisis – continue to be transported through vehicles entering our nation's POEs, the United States government should prioritize increasing the use of NII systems to thoroughly scan all vehicles entering the country.

In an effort to curb arms, drug, and human trafficking into our country, we have proposed legislation that aims to increase the rate of NII scanning of vehicles entering the United States to 100 percent.³ During the next joint meeting in February between your office and your Mexican counterparts, we encourage you to use our legislation as a framework for discussing further deploying NII systems to the southwest border. By providing our Customs and Border Protection officers with the technology needed to detect contraband, we would increase their ability to combat TCO trafficking operations.

¹ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. "2019 National Drug Threat Assessment." December 2019. https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019-NDTA-final-01-14-2020_Low_Web-DIR-007-20_2019.pdf

² Testimony of Hector Mancha, El Paso Director of Field Operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, for a hearing titled "Promoting Safe and Efficient Travel and Trade at America's Land Ports of Entry" before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability. December 2, 2019. <https://homeland.house.gov/activities/hearings/promoting-safe-and-efficient-travel-and-trade-at-americas-land-ports-of-entry>.

³ Congress.gov. "H.R. 5273 – Securing America's Ports Act." <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5273>.

Again, we support building binational counter-trafficking efforts at the southwest border and we stand ready to assist your efforts.

Sincerely,



Xochitl Torres Small
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress